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Pretoria's New Ties With Black Neighbors Sour

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JOHANNESBURG, Feb. 8 — In marked contrast to a euphoric mood in this region less than a year ago, South Africa's relations with neighboring black-governed nations appears to have soured.

Its pacts with these ideological foes, hailed at the time as a breakthrough in regional diplomacy, seem to have brought few and ambiguous benefits to those nations with which South Africa concluded the accords.

In the last week, Angola, Botswana and Zambia have complained in varying degrees of what they say is South African aggressiveness, and South Africa has responded caustically to some of the complaints.

Reports from Mozambique, meanwhile, indicate there has been a widening of an insurgency that the Marxist authorities in Maputo hoped to end by signing a nonaggression pact with South Africa last March. On Tuesday, for the first time, a ranking Mozambican official directly accused South Africa of flouting the accord.

Complex Roots of Complaints

The causes cited for complaint are complex and vary from nation to nation. In some cases, they seem to reflect a diminished sense of the value of seeking improved relations or dealing with South Africa, despite continued economic and other dependency in black-ruled Africa on this racially divided nation.

"We have tried to work together but it has not borne fruit at all," President Kenneth D. Kaunda of Zambia was quoted as saying in a newspaper interview in South Africa Tuesday. "So, really, what is the basis of being hopeful? None at all. We have been expecting something, and that something has not happened at all because South Africa has not moved in the way we hoped she would."

Mr. Kaunda, who offered to mediate last year between South Africa and black-governed countries in southern Africa, said the causes of grievance were the continued presence of South African troops in Angola, South Africa's continued domination in South-West Africa and the failure of the non-aggression treaty between South Africa and Mozambique.

Reagan Administration Role

The United States brokered South Africa's agreements with Angola and Mozambique and has taken the lead in Western efforts, so far inconclusive, to secure the independence of South-West Africa, which is also known as Namibia. Chester A. Crocker, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs arrived in South Africa Thursday night in what was interpreted here as an effort to revive the initiatives.

The breakthroughs last year were hailed in part as a triumph for the Reagan Administration's policy of seeking what it calls "constructive engagement" with South Africa, a policy that

holds that Pretoria is more likely to respond to quiet persuasion than to open confrontation. Both sets of agreements, however, had been preceded by widespread South African military action — either overt or covert — in Marxist-ruled Mozambique and Angola.

At the time of the agreements, the enthusiasm among South African and Western officials seemed understandable. Last February, South Africa and Angola agreed to set up a joint force to oversee a South African troop withdrawal from southern Angola in return for Angolan curbs on anti-South Africa insurgents based there.

Mood of Reconciliation Changes

In March, South Africa and Mozambique agreed to withhold support for each other's internal foes. Buoyed by the triumph, P. W. Botha, the South African leader who is now President, embarked on a tour of Western Europe that was billed as a victorious emergence from his country's isolation. There was talk of a tour of African countries, too. The mood was one of regional reconciliation with South Africa acknowledged as the superpower.

Since then, the atmosphere has changed.

This week, South Africa and Angola exchanged accusations that each was trying to overthrow the other's Government — through South African-backed insurgents led by Jonas Savimbi who are fighting in Angola, and through the South African exile group known as the African National Congress.

President José Eduardo dos Santos of Angola accused South Africa of embarking on a "vast destabilization plan." The charge was seen here as reflecting South African suggestions that pro-Soviet figures had regained ascendancy in the Luanda leadership.

Exchange Reflects a Stalemate

The South African Foreign Minister, Rieolf F. Botha, responded by accus-

ing the Angolans of offering training facilities to the African National Congress and of supporting insurgents fighting to end South Africa's control of South-West Africa. He questioned the legitimacy of the Luanda authorities, saying free elections had not been held in Angola since it achieved independence from Portugal in 1975.

The exchange reflected a stalemate of longer standing. Under the accord reached last February, South African troops should now have pulled out of Angola. But they are still there.

For its part, South Africa accused the Angolans of failing to hold back the insurgents of the South-West Africa People's Organization.

Foreign Minister Botha said at a news conference in Cape Town last week that South African officials had "reliable evidence" that the South-West African rebels were "gathering in Angola and preparing for a southward thrust when more rains start falling."

The wet season has been a time for insurgent advances because dense

rain-fed foliage provides cover. It has also been a time of South African thrusts into Angola to intercept the advances, but it was not clear whether Mr. Botha's comments contained an implicit threat of military action.

The cornerstone of South African regional policy last year was so-called Nkomati accord with Mozambique. With the widening of the war there, the accord has brought the Mozambican President, Samora M. Machel, no tangible benefits. South Africa, by contrast, secured a major victory when the Mozambique expelled members of the African National Congress under the terms of the agreement. But, Mr. Botha seemed to say last week, there were ambiguities for South Africa, too.

The Price for South Africa

The insurgency has cut rail and power links between Mozambique and South Africa, and Foreign Minister Botha indicated that the hostilities were causing discomfort.

"It is in our interest that the railway should operate and be secure," he said. "It is in our interest that the power line from South Africa to Maputo should carry that power."

The war in Mozambique is being fought between Government forces and the Mozambique National Resistance, of which South Africa was once regarded as the main backer. Foreign Minister Botha denied that South Africa was still supporting the insurgents and said he was acting as an intermediary between them and the Government in peace negotiations.

The rebel army, he said last week, feels it is near victory and so has pre-

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sented peace conditions unacceptable to President Machel. Mozambique previously avoided directly accusing South Africa of continuing to support the rebels. But this week, in a display of mounting impatience and perhaps desperation, Foreign Minister Joaquim A. Chissano asserted that nonobservance of the Nkomati accord by South Africa was to blame for the continued fighting.

Pressure on Botswana

Foreign Minister Botha has said unidentified groups in Europe, Africa and the Arab world support the rebels.

After the Nkomati agreement was signed, South Africa was reported to have brought strong pressure on Botswana and Lesotho to sign similar accords, but both small countries resisted. The pressure on Botswana now seems to have been revived with South African claims that the African National Congress is now using Botswana as a corridor for infiltration.

Earlier this week, Botswana accused South Africa of planning to invade in a bizarre alliance with the fragmented and nominally independent tribal homeland called Bophuthatswana, which has little freedom of action beyond the limits set for it by the white authorities in South Africa.

On Tuesday, Mr. Botha denied there was such an invasion plan. But he said he had urged the authorities in Botswana to reach an understanding about how to prevent either country from being "used for the planning or execution of acts of sabotage or terrorism against the other."